

STATUE OF LIBERTY NATIONAL MONUMENT EMPLOYEE  
HOUSING, TRIPLEX  
(Statue of Liberty National Monument, Building No. 44A-C)  
Statue of Liberty National Monument  
Liberty Island

HABS NY-6397-C  
*HABS NY-6397-C*

New York County  
New York

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### STATUE OF LIBERTY NATIONAL MONUMENT EMPLOYEE HOUSING, TRIPLEX (Statue of Liberty National Monument, Building No. 44A-C)

HABS No. NY-6397-C

- Location:** Statue of Liberty National Monument, Liberty Island, New York, New York County, NY and Jersey City, Hudson County, NJ
- The Triplex is located at latitude 40.690915, longitude -74.046843. The point was obtained through Google Earth (datum: WGS84) in June 2014. There is no restriction on its release to the public.
- Present Owner:** National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior
- Present Occupant:** Unoccupied
- Present Use:** Vacant, slated for demolition
- Significance:** The Triplex on Liberty Island is a simple single-story brick building built in the early 1950s to house the Statue of Liberty National Monument's staff and their families. This three-unit structure has independent interiors; the three units have been arranged in a stepped manner with overlapping corners. While the Triplex and other employee housing units built on Liberty Island stand in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, they also constitute a distinct place in the island's landscape. Tucked away on the northwest end of the island, these dwellings have served to house various National Park Service employees (most recently the Superintendent and his wife) from 1952 to fall 2012 when Hurricane Sandy storms forced the final two residents to evacuate.
- While the Statue of Liberty was publicly dedicated on October 28, 1886, the Statue only became a National Monument in 1924. It was not until 1937 that the National Park Service achieved sole jurisdiction over the island when the War Department finally withdrew from the remnants of Fort Wood (occupied since its construction in 1811). Under the leadership of the Park Service's Chief Architect Thomas C. Vint, NPS landscape architect Norman T. Newton developed a Master Plan for Liberty Island in 1937. Newton's design included clearing out the old, obsolete military buildings on the premises, developing facilities to better beautify the island and accommodate the rising number of visitors, and constructing employee housing to accommodate more staff.
- During the early 1940s, the Park Service constructed the Administration Building and Concessions Building and expanded the northwest area of

the island by dredging/landfill. It was not until the post-World War II era that the Park Service was able to realize new employee housing units to replace the old Army quarters. In addition to building a seawall around the island and constructing a new western pier/ferry landing at this time, the National Park Service had employee houses designed and constructed between 1949 and 1952. The mid-twentieth century employee housing units are thus a part of the site development by the National Park Service. The Park Service and Congress viewed these improvements as essential in response to public outcry at the untidiness of the island hosting a highly recognizable American icon.

The employee housing units are evidence of a larger mid-twentieth-century trend in National Park practices to provide adequate, up-to-date employee housing. These structures were constructed specifically in an effort to enlarge the staff of the National Park Service and improve interpretive efforts in order to better serve the swelling numbers of park visitors in the postwar era.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: October 23, 1951-August 21, 1952.<sup>1</sup> The construction and landscaping of the central courtyard was completed on December 15, 1953.<sup>2</sup>
2. Architect: James C. Mackenzie, whose practice was located at 5 East 57<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, was the principal architect of the employee housing on Liberty Island. Born in New Jersey and educated at Columbia University and the École des Beaux Arts, Mackenzie began his profession as a draftsman for the prestigious architectural firm McKim, Mead, and White. Beginning his own practice in 1919, his most noteworthy designs include the neo-Georgian corporate headquarters of the Reader's Digest in Chappaqua, New York (1937) and the Harlem Branch of the YMCA (1932, a designated New York City Landmark). He also designed many large and small houses, winning several prizes for his skillful use of brick in residential design. E.W. Aschmann (Acting Architect) & A. L. Stabler (Draftsman) worked with Mackenzie in preparing the drawings for the employee residences on Liberty Island.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Reports, Newell H. Foster, Superintendent, Statue of Liberty National Monument, (October 1951 and August 1952), Box 300, Entry P11 Administration Files, 1949-1971, RG 79 Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD [hereafter Entry P11, RG 79, NARA II].

<sup>2</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Reports, (December 1953), Box 300, Entry P11, RG 79, NARA II.

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Danza, "Architects Appendix: James Cameron Mackenzie, Jr.," *Fieldston Historic District Designation Report (Volume 1)* (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, January 10, 2006), 52-53.

3. Original and subsequent owners and uses: The National Park Service has owned and occupied the premises since its initial construction in 1952. The full-time residential use of the Triplex were phased out during the late 1990s and early 2000s. These structures were instead used by staff agencies as non-residential day quarters and storage. When Hurricane Sandy hit the island in October 2012 Superintendent David Luchsinger and his wife Debbie were living in Unit 44A of the Triplex (Superintendent's House was undergoing renovation at the time).<sup>4</sup>
  4. Contractors: Michael H. Field, Inc. was contracted and completed construction of the employee housing units, and Turecamo Construction Co. won the contract and completed construction and landscaping for the employee housing units' central courtyard.
  5. Original plans and construction: James Mackenzie produced the original architectural drawings for the project in 1949, and the construction specifications were won by Krendel Construction Co.'s bid in 1950. However, the Comptroller eventually ruled the initial contract invalid, which led to a new public bid in September 1951 won by Michael H. Field, Inc. Thus construction was delayed for a year, and the Triplex was completed on August 21, 1952.<sup>5</sup> The three-unit structure largely retains its original form and appearance, particularly on the exterior (Figures 1 and 2).
  6. Alterations and additions: Changes to the Triplex have included replacement windows, alterations to entrance porches, and replacement kitchen and bathroom cabinets and fixtures. The plan of Unit 44B was altered by the extension of the entrance foyer wall to create an enclosed hall on one side of the living room. In Unit 44A the wall between the kitchen and dinette was altered.
- B. Historical Context: See overview report for Statue of Liberty National Monument Employee Housing (HABS No. NY-6397) for detailed historical context. For architectural information about the Superintendent's House and Duplex, see individual HABS reports (HABS No. NY-6397-A and HABS No. NY-6397-B).

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Triplex on Liberty Island is a single-story, three-unit brick and cinderblock building with a common bond brick veneer and a shallow pitched standing seam metal hip roof. The three units connect only at the exterior

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<sup>4</sup> While the only remaining address lettering is on the central unit—Unit 44B—it follows with the Duplex to number the units left to right from their front entrances (the ones facing out toward the New York Harbor). Thus, for this report it is assumed the Triplex unit closest to the Superintendent's House is "Unit 44A" and the Triplex unit closest to the Duplex is "Unit 44C." In this report, the distinct buildings are referred to as such.

<sup>5</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Reports, Newell H. Foster, Superintendent, Statue of Liberty National Monument, (April 1950-August 1952), Entry P11, RG 79, NARA II.

corners, where they have been arranged in a stepped manner such that seven feet of wall and roofing overlaps with each successive unit at the corner (Figures 3 and 4).

2. Condition of fabric: Poor. All of the units endured destructive flooding during Hurricane Sandy storms on October 29, 2012 that ruined the flooring, walls, ceiling, and many of the porches, windows, doors, and plumbing fixtures as well.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Each rectangular footprint of a Triplex unit measures 44 feet, 10 inches by 24 feet, 10 inches. Each unit is 8 feet, 10 3/8 inches high from the finished floor to the finished ceiling.
2. Foundations: The Triplex has a shallow brick foundation visible from the exterior. The water table projects 5/8 inch from the wall surface with six visible stretcher courses below it. The brick covers the small exposed portion of the reinforced concrete structural foundation.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are a brick veneer arranged in a common bond of six stretcher courses to every one header course. The header course is incorporated into the load-bearing concrete block wall structure behind the veneer.
4. Structural system, framing: The Triplex has a spread footing concrete foundation with a crawl space—measuring 2 feet, 6 inches—located below the first floor's eight-inch reinforced concrete joists. There appear to be some concrete and brick piers under the first floor in the crawl space. According to the architectural drawings, the foundation walls were intended to be one foot thick with the exceptions occurring at the porches where it is only eight inches thick, and the bottom of all footings were intended to extend at least one foot below firm ground—a minimum of four feet from grade level.<sup>6</sup>

The load-bearing walls are executed in a hollow concrete block and brick wall system (with a course ratio 2:1) with an exterior brick veneer finish (Figure 5). The concrete blocks measure one foot, 5 1/2 inches by 7 1/2 inches and are 3 3/4 inches wide with three hollow cells while the bricks measure from 7 1/2 to 7 3/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches and are 3 3/8 inches wide. Southern pine wood framing (either dip-treated or painted with creosote) and light gauge steel members form the interior walls and framing.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Specifications for Employees' Houses, Statue of Liberty National Monument, Bedloe's Island, New York, Contract No. I-56np-63," (September 5, 1951), Box 1115, Entry P11, RG 79, NARA II, 23-25. According to archival records of the employee housing's specifications, the foundations were to include 40 ft. pressure-treated, Douglas fir piles with a safe bearing value of 15 tons while the pile caps, footings, slabs on grade, and the porch floor were all to be executed in reinforced concrete. Whether or not these piles were executed in the Triplex is unknown.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 30, 33-34.

The roof is supported by wood common rafters. The rafters are nailed to a ridge board and there is wood decking supporting the metal roof.

5. Porches and stoops: At the entry doors on the north elevation (facing the water), all three units have a brick stoop measuring 5 feet, 7 1/2 inches by 4 feet, 2 1/2 inches, accessed via two brick steps. The front entry to Unit 44A still has its simple shed roof porch with red asphalt shingles. The shed roof is supported by two engaged white painted posts, one of which is connected to a corner post by three horizontal members while a temporary unfinished wood two-by-four props up the fourth side. The other units no longer have porch roofs located at the stoops.

The rear entry porches on the south elevation (courtyard side) have concrete platforms—each measuring 5 feet by 4 feet—covered by simple wood shed roofs with red asphalt shingles. These roofs are supported by white painted wood posts with variations in detail. Unit 44C has its vinyl-covered wood posts extending out from three-foot brick knee walls. Unit 44B has engaged posts connected to corner posts by three horizontal members with a more decorative, pergola-like wood cross rafter. Unit 44A has similar engaged posts and a pergola-like wood cross rafter but does not have any horizontal members between its posts.

6. Chimneys: None. Each unit has a metal ventilator at the center of its roof. There are also crawl space vents and dryer vents on the exterior walls as well as square metal kitchen vents that swing open and can be completely closed shut on the south elevation.
7. Openings
  - a. Doorways and doors: The Triplex has six exterior doorways: each unit has a front (north elevation) and rear (south elevation) doorway. Most of these openings are currently filled with plywood (their doors have either been removed or blown away during the storms brought by Hurricane Sandy). Two of the front entry doorframes on the north elevation (facing the waterfront) have only the top and one of the side portions of the architrave remaining with an outline of the missing portion on the brick wall.

On the south elevation, Unit 44B has an original door; it is a wood paneled door with two large lights. Unit 44C has no door and is boarded up with plywood while Unit 44A has neither door nor plywood in its doorway.

- b. Windows: The Triplex has several different sized window openings, which are now filled with replacement sash (c. 1990s) or more commonly, plywood covering. The original architectural drawings indicate that each Triplex unit had three picture windows flanked by combination casement and hopper opening side lights (Figure 6). These large window openings were located at

the living room on the north (front) and east side elevations and at the rear bedroom. Each unit had a pair of French windows over the kitchen sink at the south (rear) elevation, which were later replaced by a pair of two-light sliding windows. A combination French window with hopper sash below was located on the east end of each unit (for the dinette) and front elevation at a bedroom. Small versions of the French windows were placed high in the wall on the west end elevations, one for each of the two bedrooms in each unit. Currently these openings hold a small two-light sliding sash. A small casement sash on the north elevation of each unit corresponded to the location of the bathroom; this opening now has a one-over-one double hung sashes. All of the window sashes are set directly into the brick wall without applied molding or ornament.

#### 8. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: Each unit of the Triplex has a nearly independent standing seam, metal hipped roof with a shallow 3:12 pitch. The standing seams on Unit 44B are thicker than those on the other two units suggesting its later replacement (Figure 7).
- b. Cornice, eaves: The Triplex a simple eight-inch white fascia board covering the attic vent with a two-inch trim cornice molding abutting the white vinyl soffit, which overhangs about four inches. The house has external copper gutters with a green patina and white vinyl downspouts: most of which are missing but the clips and outlines remain (Figure 8).
- c. Roof projections: There are two TV antennae (one on Unit 44A and one on Unit 44C) on the Triplex roof. Each unit's roof has a stout cylindrical ventilator and a narrow pipe vent both with a green patina.

#### C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The basic floor plan for each unit includes a small entrance hall at the north elevation entrance leading into the living room. The living room occupies the northeast corner of each unit, with a small dinette in the southeast corner next to a kitchen at the rear. A rear door and small utility room are located at the kitchen. The west side of each unit has two bedrooms -- one in each corner --and a full bathroom accessed via a narrow hall.

Unit 44A, Unit 44B, and Unit 44C were built with identical floor plans, but subsequent changes to interior walls have created some variations between the units. Units 44C and Unit 44B have small dinette rooms adjacent to their kitchens with cased openings into the living rooms, while in Unit 44A this cased opening has been infilled (Figures 9 and 10). Units 44A and 44C retain their original partial entrance hall wall, but in Unit 44B this wall has been extended and includes a door to enclose the living room.

2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: The Triplex has a variety of coverings over a concrete subfloor. The living rooms, both Unit 44A bedrooms, and one Unit 44C bedroom have wood parquet flooring arranged in alternating nine-inch squares. The other bedroom in Unit 44C has nine-inch square black and white linoleum flooring. The bedrooms in Unit 44B have nine-inch square brown vinyl tiles (Figure 11).

All kitchens have five-inch square white ceramic tiles as do the bathrooms in Unit 44A and Unit 44B. The bathroom in Unit 44C has one-inch square ceramic mosaic tile that appears to be original and matches the bathroom floors in the Duplex. The ceramic tiles are in a pattern of gray squares with a white square tile at the center. Each bathroom floor includes a five-inch wide border of black one-inch square mosaic tiles (Figures 12 and 13). The dinette areas in Unit 44B and Unit 44C have nine-inch square gray vinyl tiles.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: According to the architectural drawings, the walls and ceilings were intended to be covered with gypsum plaster on lath. However unlike traditional gypsum plaster on lath where the lath is either a wood or metal material, the plaster is applied to wallboard. With storm damage revealing the interior of walls, one finds patent no. 2,442,321 used by Newark Plaster in South Kearny, New Jersey on the wallboard, which has with circular perforated holes covered by a thick plaster layer (Figure 14). There is metal lath behind the ceramic bathroom tiles as well as around corners and window openings.

The kitchen in Unit 44C has a five-inch wide floral pattern band of wallpaper that runs along the top wall about five inches down from the ceiling. The kitchen in Unit 44B is unadorned and painted white. The kitchen in Unit 44A has a chair rail about forty-two inches up the wall that was a later alteration (Figure 15). All walls (except for in the tiled bathrooms) have a white baseboard with a toe molding and an ovolo molding above.

The bathroom in Unit 44C have a ceramic tile wainscot of four-inch square white tiles with a border of rectangular black tiles. The black tiles are coved where they meet the floor. The wainscot extends about four feet up from the floor around the toilet and sink and up to a height of seven feet inside the shower tub. This tile matches the bathrooms on the Duplex and appears to be original. The other two Triplex bathrooms each have different replacement tile wainscot.

5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The Triplex has metal door frames with hollow core wood doors, both painted white. Unit 44B and Unit 44C have unadorned cased openings between the dinette and living room. The bedroom closets have sliding doors (or at least the tracks on which they used to hang in some



cases). Many of the doorways in Unit 44B and Unit 44C have white wood trim applied later.

- b. Windows: While the window openings do not have trim on the interior, they do all have simple white painted wood window sills and aprons. The sills are fairly shallow at three inches and the aprons likewise measure about three inches with an ovolo molding between the two.
6. Decorative features: While the kitchen cabinets are almost certainly later installations, the cabinets in the dinette may be original in Unit 44B and Unit 44C. These simple, thin white cabinets on either side of the doorway between the kitchen and the dinette have two shelves in the lower cabinet and three shelves in the upper cabinet. There is an uncovered ledge and eighteen inches of space between the two enclosed portions of the cabinets (except in Unit 44B where the upper cabinet doors have been removed). The doors have coin-sized metallic knobs and magnetic fasteners located at the top and bottom of the cabinet doors.
7. Hardware: The remaining exterior doors have lever handles and deadbolts. They are hung on loose-pin hinges. Despite a variety of replacement hardware, there remain a few original round, metal doorknobs on the Triplex's closet doors. These doorknobs each have a small, circular escutcheon. On the closet interior side of these doors, there are small metal twist knobs. Both the later hinges and the original closet hardware consist of loose-pin hinges.<sup>8</sup>

The bathroom in Unit 44C retains its four original black ceramic tile wall-mounted accessories integrated into the bathroom wall tiles. These include a toilet paper holder, a soap dish, a toothbrush holder, and a towel.

8. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Most of the window openings in the Triplex (except for those in the kitchens and bathrooms) had a partially recessed radiator beneath. These radiant heaters have dense fins—hot water heating coils—that are encased in perforated, metal covers (Figure 16). The hot water for radiant heat was provided by the nearby central boiler plant.
  - b. Lighting: The lighting fixtures of the Triplex represent a variety of replacements over time. Although the majority of overhead and wall-mounted lighting fixtures have remained incandescent, there have been some florescent replacements as well as some external conduit additions. The original overhead hallway lighting—simple recessed square fixtures with metal frames and pressed glass plates—have remained in most units, as have some of the bedroom's incandescent lights with clip-on shades.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 36.

- c. Plumbing: The Triplex has interior plumbing with a full bathroom in each unit. There remain some original bathroom fixtures including the streamlined, built-in porcelain bath tubs in each unit, but the sinks and toilets have all been replaced. Unit 44C has its original shower fixtures in its bathroom (Figure 17).

D. Site

- 1. Historic landscape design: Unlike the Superintendent's House, the Duplex and Triplex were designed to face the perimeter walkway around the island's shoreline. The rear of the Triplex serves as the north side of the central courtyard surrounding by the employee housing and the rear of the Administration Building. While the original design called for a well-landscaped courtyard of walkways, in summer 2014 the landscape was given over to heaps of gravel, dirt, and categorized debris collected from the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.
- 2. Outbuildings: None.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: Architectural plans including floor plans, elevations, and construction details prepared by James C. Mackenzie, dated February 3, 1950, are reproduced below and can be found in the electronic Technical Information Center (eTIC) administered by the National Park Service's Denver Service Center.
- B. Early Views: See overview report for Statue of Liberty National Monument Employee Housing (HABS No. NY-6397) for historic photos of the employee housing.
- C. Selected Bibliography:

Bob Hope Memorial Library, Ellis Island National Immigration Museum, Statue of Liberty National Monument (STLI), New York, NY.

Danza, Cynthia. "Architects Appendix: James Cameron Mackenzie, Jr." *Fieldston Historic District Designation Report (Volume 1)*. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, January 10, 2006.

Electronic Technical Information Center (eTIC), Denver Service Center, National Park Service.

RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD.

RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region, New York City, NY.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the Statue of Liberty National Monument Employee Housing was undertaken in summer 2014 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Heritage Documentation Programs (HDP) of the National Park Service (Catherine C. Lavoie, Chief, HABS; Richard O'Connor, Chief, HDP). The project was sponsored by Statue of Liberty National Monument (STLI), John Piltzecker, Superintendent. Project planning was coordinated by Robert Arzola (HABS Architect) and by Diana Pardue (Chief, Museum Services, STLI). Field recording and measured drawings were completed by Daniel De Sousa (HABS Architect). Samuel R. Palfreyman (Ph.D. Candidate, Boston University) assisted with field measuring and served as project historian, with guidance from Lisa P. Davidson (HABS Historian). Contract photographer Joseph Elliott completed large-format photographs during spring 2015.

PART V. ILLUSTRATIONS

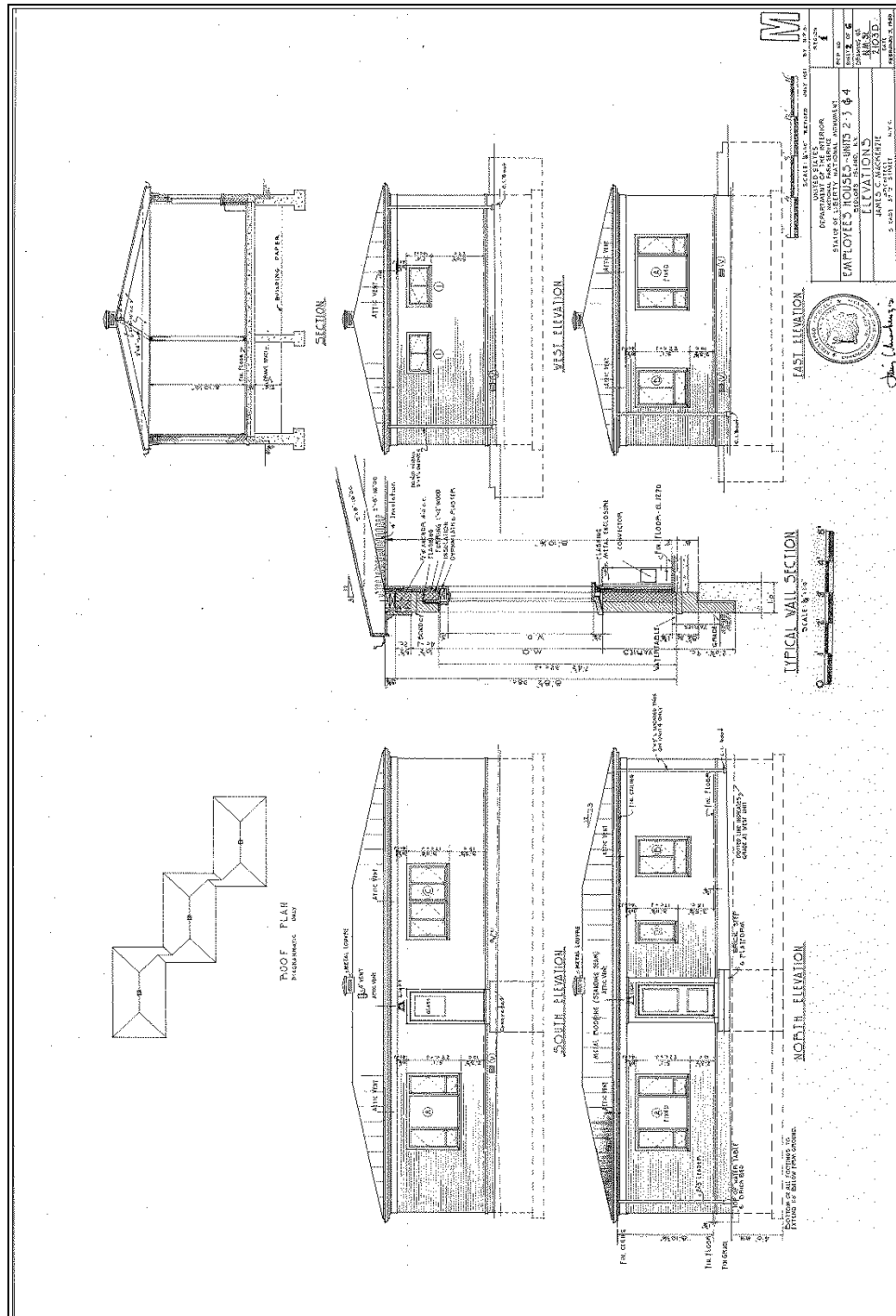
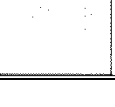


Figure 1: Elevations and section, Triplex, February 3, 1950.

Note the diagram of the roof plan showing the stepped arrangement of the Triplex units.

Source: Electronic Technical Information Center (eTIC), Denver Service Center, National Park Service.



Note the dashed lines between the living room and dinette area. Unit 44A has walled up this cased opening.  
Source: Electronic Technical Information Center (eTIC), Denver Service Center, National Park Service.





Figure 3: Triples, Unit 44B south elevation (rear entryway), July 16, 2014.  
Note the symmetrical, three-bay arrangement with a central entryway and the corner connection to the other units.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 4: Triples, west and south elevations through the cluttered courtyard, July 16, 2014.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 5: Triples, Unit 44B's interior living room wall: facing east, July 16, 2014.  
Note the revealed hollow concrete block and brick load-bearing exterior wall.  
Source: Photograph by author.

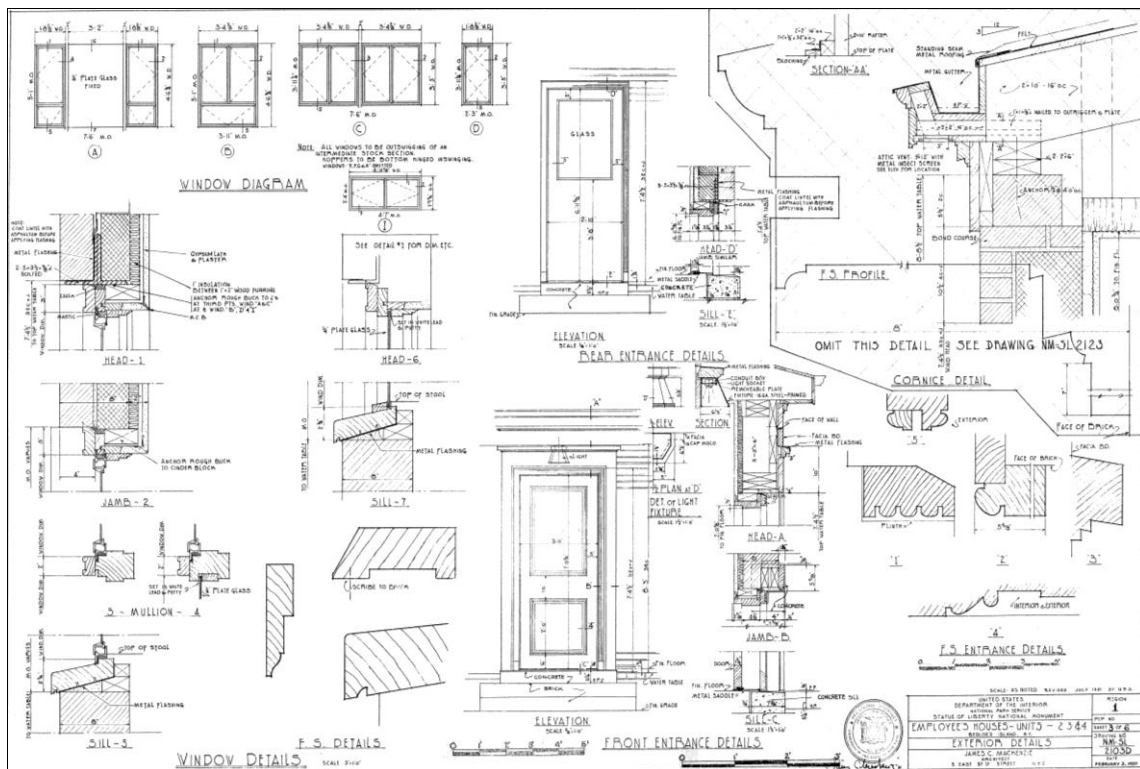


Figure 6: Exterior Details, Triples (Units 2, 3, & 4), February 3, 1950.  
Source: Electronic Technical Information Center (eTIC), Denver Service Center, National Park Service.





Figure 7: Triplex, view down from the second story of the Duplex toward Unit 44C, July 16, 2014.  
Note the simple standing seam, metal hipped roof and external copper gutters with a green patina.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 8: Triplex, Unit 44C's northeast corner, cornice detail, June 18, 2014.  
Source: Photograph by author.





Figure 9: Triplex, facing southeast inside the living room of Unit 44B, July 16, 2014. Note the passage to the dinette.  
Source: Photograph by author.

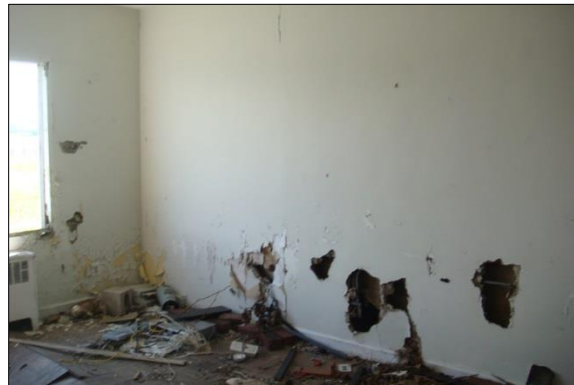


Figure 10: Triplex, facing southeast inside the living room of Unit 44A, June 18, 2014.  
Note the continuation of the wall instead of a passage to the dinette.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 11: Triplex, view from Unit 44C's northwest corner bedroom looking through the corridor into the living room, June 18, 2014. Note the extensive flood damage to the parquet flooring, walls, and doors.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 12: Triples, Unit 44C's bathroom, June 18, 2014.  
Note the original tile flooring, tile wainscot, bathtub, and cross-bar valves.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 13: Triples, Unit 44B's bathroom, July 16, 2014.  
Note the newer tile floors, walls, and fixtures compared to above.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 14: Triples, Unit 44A's living room wall facing south, June 18, 2014.  
Note the plaster-on-perforated-wallboard construction and the parquet flooring.  
Source: Photograph by author.

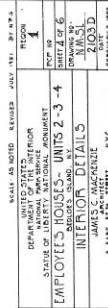


Figure 15: Triples, Unit 44A's kitchen facing east, June 18, 2014.  
Source: Photograph by author.



Figure 16: Triples, Unit 44A's living room facing east, June 18, 2014.  
Note the radiator below the window and the view of the Manhattan skyline.  
Source: Photograph by author.

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Source: Electronic Technical Information Center (eTIC), Denver Service Center, National Park Service.